FANTAGRAPHICS PRESS
RICHARD CORBEN'S
CHILDREN OF FIRE
IN COLOR!
$2
$2.75 IN CANADA
NUMBER 3 OF 3
THE CONCLUSION!
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A TEDIOUS END TO TEDIOUS COLORING.

BECAUSE OF ILLNESS BEGINNING CHRISTMAS (WHAT A WAY TO SPEND THE HOLIDAYS!), SOME ADDITIONAL WORK INCLUDING THE SECOND ISSUE OF **VIC AND BLOOD** FOR MAD DOG GRAPHICS, AND THE EXTRA LENGTH OF THIS CHAPTER, THIS FINAL ISSUE OF **CHILDREN OF FIRE** IS PROBABLY A COUPLE WEEKS LATE. THE COLORING TECHNIQUE USED ON **CHILDREN OF FIRE** AND VIRTUALLY ALL THE COLOR COMICS I'VE DONE IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS IS ONE I DEVELOPED MYSELF AND IS EXTREMELY **TEDIOUS**. THE PURPOSE OF THIS TECHNIQUE WAS TO CREATE BRIGHTLY COLORED COMICS **BUT** WITH A FULL RANGE OF MODELING EFFECTS. IT HAD TO BE FASTER AND LESS EXPENSIVE THAN FULL COLOR OIL PAINTING. IT CONSISTS OF A FOUR LAYERED OVERLAY FOR EACH INK COLOR THAT IS PHOTOGRAPHED OVER A CONTINUOUS TONE ORIGINAL ARTWORK. NO REGULAR PHOTOENGRAVER COULD COPE WITH TRANSLATING THIS MASSIVE STACK OF ACETATE INTO FILM SEPARATIONS, SO I HAD TO DO THIS CHORE ALSO, ON THE CORBEN COPY CAMERA. IT WORKED WELL, BUT NOW I'VE COME TO A POINT WHERE IT'S OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS. I'M TIRED OF THE LONG HOURS OF MAKING COLOR OVERLAYS, OF NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE IF THE COLOR COMPOSITION WORKED UNTIL AFTER A PROOF IS MADE, AND OF BEING THE SLOWEST OF THE COMIC BOOK ARTISTS. SO, IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE. THE NEXT CORBEN COMIC WILL UTILIZE A MORE STANDARD AND FASTER ART AND COLORING STYLE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. I HOPE YOU LIKE IT.

CREDITS:

CHILDREN OF FIRE WRITTEN, DRAWN, COLORED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD, DRAWN BY RICHARD CORBEN WITH PRIMITIVE COLOR BY ZIPATONE OVERLAYS.

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN.

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HERE'S SOME LETTERS.

DEAR AIRBRUSH KING:

YOU KNOW, YOU'RE STUFF GETS BETTER AND BETTER AND **CHILDREN OF FIRE 2** SHOWS IT. THE CLARITY OF YOUR IMAGES HAS EVEN IMPROVED FROM THE FIRST ISSUE. I'M AFRAID, HOWEVER, THAT I HAVE TO AGREE WITH MR. STORMON ABOUT YOUR BACK UP FEATURES BEING TOO DARK. THEY WERE A LITTLE BETTER THAN THE FIRST ISSUE, BUT JUST LOOK AT THE BLACK AND WHITE VERSIONS AND IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH DIFFERENCE THERE IS. THE BEST (OR WORST) EXAMPLE IS THE FIRST RAZAR STORY FROM THE FIRST ISSUE OF **CHILDREN OF FIRE**. I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S WAY TOO DARK COMPARED TO THE BLACK AND WHITE. I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M NAGGING YOU ABOUT IT, BUT I DO KNOW YOU'RE CAPABLE OF A BETTER PRODUCT.

BACK TO **CHILDREN OF FIRE** THOUGH, I LIKE IT! I'M KIND OF TIRED OF SEEING THAT WEIRD WIZARD MIDGET IN HALF YOUR WORK, BUT THE WORK ON PUCCA AND THE TWO ALIENS IS SUPERB. YOU SEEM TO HAVE FIGURED OUT HOW TO PUT THE MOST IN YOUR CHARACTERS AS FAR AS REALISM GOES. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY ABOUT THE STORY. IT SEEMS KIND OF POINTLESS, BUT I SEE IT MORE AS AN OBSTACLE TO YOUR GREAT ART.

DEN WAS MENTIONED IN THE LETTER'S COLUMN AND I'M GLAD TO KNOW YOU HAD WRITTEN MORE STORIES ABOUT HIM. THIS IS YOUR CHANCE! HOW ABOUT "TALES OF NEVERWHERE", A REGULAR COMIC BOOK PUT OUT ON A REGULAR BASIS WITH NEW PERVERTED ADVENTURES! I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST YOUR NEW BOOKS NOT HAVING A LOT OF GRAPHIC SEX, NUDITY AND VIOLENCE; BUT, AS I THINK YOU KNOW, DEN WOULD BE, SHALL WE SAY, NAKED WITHOUT THEM. IT'S WHAT MAKES IT MORE APPEALING IN SOME WAYS. PLEASE CONSIDER IT. I THINK IT WOULD BE WELL WORTH THE EFFORT. I WAS EVEN THINKING YOU COULD TRY IT IN PEN AND INK DRAWINGS WITH A MINIMAL AIRBRUSH OVERLAY. THIS WAY YOU COULD CONCENTRATE ON LAYOUT AND DETAIL IN YOUR INKING, PLUS BEING ABLE TO PUT IT OUT FASTER.

WELL, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR PUTTING OUT SUCH QUALITY WORK IN YOUR YEARS AND SYMPATHIZING FOR WHAT MUST BE A PAINSTAKING PROCESS. ALL THE BEST LUCK IS SENT TO YOU AND FANTAGOR. SAY HI TO GURGY FOR ME.

PAUL LITTELL
NORMAN, OK

PAUL, YOU'VE BEEN READING MY MIND! SEE THE BACK COVER FOR AN AD ANNOUNCING THE NEXT FANTAGOR COMIC. THE FOLLOWING LETTERS ARE ALSO CONCERNED BY CORBEN'S "TOO DARK" IMAGES.

RICH:

MR. STORMAN'S LETTER IN #2 RAISES SOME POINTS OF INTEREST. I DO NOT LIKE REPRINTS EITHER - BUT I AGREE WITH YOUR USE OF THEM TO MAINTAIN THE ARTISTIC INTEGRITY OF THE BOOK. I HATE HAVING A WORTHLESS BACKUP STORY MORE THAN I DISLIKE GOOD REPRINTS. I MUST AGREE WITH HIM THAT THE COLORIZED REPRINTS ARE TOO DARK - OR ARE THE SCENES TAKING PLACE AT NIGHT? I WOULD ENJOY A LITTLE MORE BRIGHTNESS.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH: I DO NOT ENJOY THE "FOREIGN LANGUAGE" OF THE ALIENS. I ENJOY STORIES IN CLEAR-CUT ENGLISH.

MIKE LOVINGER
LAS VEGAS, NEV.

DEAR RICHARD,

AS TO YOUR FULL COLOR BOOK, IT LOOKS GOOD, THOUGH I HAD MY OBJECTIONS...**CHILDREN OF FIRE** DID NOTHING FOR ME AS I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE CHARACTERS OR WHAT'S GOING ON TO GET INVOLVED IN THE STORY. MAYBE NEXT ISSUE. OF COURSE, OLD ZEG AND ZOMUK ARE FAMILIAR CHARACTERS. I'M INTERESTED IN SEEING WHAT DEVELOPS THERE (IS THIS NEVERWHERE? THAT DOES LOOK LIKE A HAIR STONE). **RAZAR** WAS THE WORST THING IN THE BOOK. I WISH TO GOSH THESE PRINTERS WOULD DO IT'S HALF TONE RIGHT. I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS PRINTED PROPERLY SINCE YOUR FIRST **FANTAGOR** ISSUE YOU DID YOURSELF. THIS TIME IT REALLY WENT MUDDY. INSTEAD OF SOFT AIRBRUSHED TONES, IT LOOKED LIKE INK SMEARED ON WITH Q-TIPS. THE COLOR ONLY HELPED DARKEN IT MORE. I COULDN'T TELL WHAT THE HELL WAS GOING ON IN MOST OF THE PANELS. **TO SPEAR A FAIR MAIDEN** I LIKED BEST THIS ISSUE. THE COLOR WAS AN IMPROVEMENT OVER ITS FIRST APPEARANCE AND YOUR "COVERING" UP OF THE VITAL PARTS WAS WELL DONE THIS TIME.

HOPEFULLY, MORE WILL BE REVEALED ON **CHILDREN OF FIRE** NEXT ISSUE. I JUST COULDN'T GET INTO IT...IT SEEMED TO HAVE A BEGINNING AND MIDDLE, BUT NO CONCLUSION. I REALIZE THESE STORIES ARE CONTINUATIONS, BUT YOUR **RIP IN TIME** SERIES SEEMED SELF-CONTAINED IN EACH ISSUE; THEY COULD STAND ON THEIR OWN IF THEY HAD TO. **CHILDREN**, IN THIS FIRST ISSUE, SEEMS TO NEED THE OTHERS TO HELP IT STAND UP. OF COURSE, ONE THING THAT KEPT ME FROM GETTING INTO THE CHARACTERS IS THAT ALIEN DIALOGUE...I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT. BUT THEN AGAIN, YOU DID GIVE A LINGUISTIC KEY TO IT DIDN'T YOU?

HERB ARNOLD
KANSAS CITY, KS.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF MY CAREER, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN PLAGUED BY COMPLAINTS ABOUT MY DARK DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS. FOR YEARS, I THOUGHT THIS WAS A PROBLEM WITH MY SKILLS. BUT NOW I KNOW THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY SKILLS; I REALLY HAVE A DARK VISION. WHEN I'M WORKING ON A PAINTING OR COMIC PAGE, I DON'T STOP UNTIL I'VE ACHIEVED THAT DARK MOOD WITH CLARK DETAILS. MANY VIEWERS DON'T LOOK INTO THE DARKNESS THAT CONTAINS THE "MEAT" OF THE PIECE. SPECIFICALLY, THE FIRST PRINTING OF RAZAR THE UNHERO WAS PHOTOENGRAVED SO THE DETAILS MOVED INTO A HIGHER RANGE WHICH WAS APPARENTLY EASIER FOR MOST PEOPLE TO "READ". BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THIS ALSO BROUGHT THE ARTS SOLID BLACK AREAS UP SO THAT THEY WERE RENDERED AS DARK GREY, RATHER THAN SOLID BLACK. FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, THIS IS A FLAW. WHEN RAZAR THE UNHERO WAS REDONE IN COLOR, I DID THE PHOTOENGRAVING MYSELF AND I MADE SURE THE BLACK AREAS PRINTED JUST AS BLACK AS IS POSSIBLE WITH THE PROCESS USED. THE DETAILS ARE STILL THERE; THEY ARE JUST VERY DARK.

IN CORBEN'S WORLD, IT IS ALWAYS EVENING, NIGHT OR MORNING. MIDDAY IS USUALLY SKIPPED OVER BRIEFLY.

CRAIG STORMON'S LETTER IN CHILDREN OF FIRE 2 CREATED A "STORM" OF LETTERS FROM OTHER READERS EITHER AGREEING OR DISAGREEING WITH HIS POINTS ON DARK IMAGES AND REPRINTS TOO...

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER.

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER.

DEAR CORBEN

I THINK **RIP IN TIME** ROCKED! I ALSO LOVE **CHILDREN OF FIRE**; AND, I THINK THESE COLOR CORBEN COMICS ARE REALLY FIRST-CLASS! I ALSO HAVE AN EXTENSIVE "CORBEN LIBRARY" OF LOTS OF YOUR OLDER AND NEWER STUFF. I'VE BEEN A FAN FOR SOME TIME. I DISAGREE WITH CRAIG STORMON BECAUSE I THINK YOU SHOULD REPRINT AS MUCH STUFF AS POSSIBLE! I THINK IT CAN ONLY HELP BECAUSE THEN EVERYONE WILL KNOW WHAT A SUPERIOR ARTIST YOU ARE! (ALSO, THERE'S SOME STUFF I'M SURE I MIGHT NEVER SEE OTHERWISE!) AS LONG AS YOU KEEP PUTTING YOUR ARTWORK OUT, I'LL KEEP BUYING IT!

KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!

DAWSON CHASTAIN
MORGANTOWN, W. VA.

P.S. WHY DID YOU SIGN YOUR NAME "CORBAY" ON THE COVER OF **1984 #2**?

CORBAY IS A COMBINATION OF CORBEN AND DUBAY. BILL DUBAY WAS THE EDITOR OF 1984 AND HE DID A COMPOSITIONAL SKETCH FOR THE COVER.

DEAR MR. CORBEN:

I SUPPOSE THAT YOU PRINTED MR. STORMON'S LETTER IN **CHILDREN OF FIRE #2** TO SEE WHAT RESPONSE IT WOULD GET. WELL, IT SURE GOT A RESPONSE FROM ME.

MR. STORMON EXPRESSED HIS GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THAT SO MANY OF YOUR RECENT COMICS REPRINT WORKS THAT PREVIOUSLY APPEARED IN UNDERGROUND COMICS. HE SAYS HE ALREADY HAS ALL OF THE BACK UP STORIES, "AS DO MOST OF YOUR FANS." I'M ONE OF THE FANS THAT HAS MOST OF THOSE UNDERGROUNDS, AND I CERTAINLY HOPE THAT HE IS WRONG. I HOPE THAT THE NUMBER OF "MOST OF YOUR FANS" IS NOT LIMITED TO PEOPLE WHO A) WERE COMICS-CONSCIOUS FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, B) HAD THE FORESIGHT TO BUY UNDERGROUNDS AND C) THE GOOD SENSE TO HOLD ONTO THEM. I AM ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT YOUR BEST STORIES ARE BEING REPRINTED. I WANT YOU TO BE PUT IN FRONT OF NEWER AND LARGER AUDIENCES. THERE'S A LOT OF YOUR PREVIOUS WORK THAT IS HARD FOR PEOPLE NEW TO CORBEN TO LOCATE NOWADAYS. I DON'T WANT PEOPLE THAT ENJOY YOUR WORK TO BE LIMITED TO THE ONES WHO'VE ALREADY SEEN IT BEFORE. THE UNDERGROUND AUDIENCE WASN'T ALL THAT LARGE FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, TO SAY THAT "MOST OF YOUR FANS" ARE MERELY THE SURVIVORS OF THAT SMALL GROUP IS, I FEEL, AN INSULT TO THE WIDE AUDIENCE YOU ARE ENTITLED TO.

MR. STORMON SAYS HE HAS A "COMPLETE SET OF ALL OLD UNDERGROUNDS" AND WHINES THAT SOME OF IT IS BEING REPEATED. I WONDER HOW EDGAR ALLEN POE WOULD REACT TO A COMPLAINT THAT HIS STORIES WERE BEING REPRINTED FOR WIDER PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT AND APPRECIATION WHEN THEY'D ALREADY PRINTED ONCE IN RARE FIRST EDITIONS. I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE THERE WHEN YOUR STORIES FIRST APPEARED. I ENJOYED THEM A LOT AND I'M GLAD OTHERS ARE GETTING A FRESH CHANCE TO ENJOY THEM TOO.

I SUSPECT THAT MANY OF YOUR STORIES WOULD HAVE APPEARED IN COLOR IN THE FIRST PLACE IF ECONOMICS AND OPPORTUNITY HAD BEEN DIFFERENT. I AM GLAD THAT YOU HAVE THE CHANCE TO APPLY COLOR TO THEM NOW. IF MR. STORMON HAS DIFFICULTY APPRECIATING ARTWORK THE WAY THE ARTIST PREFERS IT TO BE, HE CAN ALWAYS CLIMB BACK UP IN HIS IVORY TOWER AND DELICATELY SLIDE HIS OLD ORIGINAL UNDERGROUNDS OUT OF STORAGE TO LOOK THEM OVER AGAIN, INSTEAD.

SO, MR. CORBEN, PLEASE KEEP THOSE NEW STORIES COMING. AND, IF TO DO THAT YOU HAVE TO FILL OUT A COMIC WITH PREVIOUS B&W STORIES NOW DONE IN COLOR, PLEASE KNOW THAT THIS IS ONE FAN OF LONG STANDING WHO IS VERY HAPPY WITH THAT AND DOESN'T CONSIDER IT A POOR BARGAIN AT ALL.

ASIDE FROM ALL OF THE ABOVE, I WOULD GLADLY OFFER TO HELP ANY OF YOUR **NEW** FANS KNOW SOME PLACES WHERE YOUR WORK HAS PREVIOUSLY APPEARED. ENCLOSED IS A COPY OF A BIBLIOGRAPHY I HAVE COMPILED FROM THE CORBEN WORKS I HAVE RUN ACROSS. I WILL GLADLY MAIL ONE FREE TO ANYBODY WHO SENDS ME AN ENVELOPE WITH TWO STAMPS ON IT. (UNDOUBTEDLY, MR. STORMAN, WITH HIS "COMPLETE COLLECTION", COULD HAVE BEEN MORE COMPREHENSIVE, SO THIS COMES WITH MY APOLOGIES.)

RICK OBERMEYER
2124 MISCINDY PLACE
ORLANDO, FL. 32806

HELLO RICHARD CORBEN,

I HAVE BEEN ENJOYING **CHILDREN OF FIRE**. IT'S AN INTERESTING STORY AND I AM AWAITING THE LAST ISSUE WITH INTRIGUE. I LIKE THE REVERSING OF THE OLD FANTASY STEREOTYPING THAT YOU'VE DONE. HAVING THE FEMALE BEING THE POWERFUL ONE AND THE MALE BEING THE WEAKER ONE IN NEED OF PROTECTION. UNFORTUNATELY, KIL, THE FEMALE, IS AS BORING AS A LARGE NUMBER OF HER MALE MUSCLE-BOUND COMPATRIOTS. MAL IS ANOTHER STORY. HE'S DIFFERENT FROM MOST OF THE FANTASY AND COMIC BOOK HEROES AROUND IN THAT HE CAN'T PERFORM THE FLASHY ATHLETIC TRICKS AND MAKES DO AS BEST HE CAN WITH WHAT HE HAS. HE IS SORT OF AN **ELRIC** WITHOUT A **STORMBRINGER**. SOMEONE WHO HAS TO WORK HARD FOR HIS OR HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS IS MORE ADMIRABLE THAN SOMEONE WHO EASILY ACHIEVES HIS OR HER GOALS. I WISH YOU WOULD HAVE KEPT THE TWO NEWHALES INVOLVED IN THE STORY. THEIR ACTIONS WOULD HAVE PROVIDED AN INTERESTING COUNTERPOINT TO THE ACTIONS OF THE HUMANS AND WHATEVER ZOMUK IS.

THE ART, OF COURSE, IS THE REAL STAR OF THE SERIES. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU'RE ONE OF THE TOP COMIC ARTISTS OF ALL TIMES AND YOUR STYLE IS AS INDIVIDUAL AS ANY. I SEE TRACES OF JOHN SEVERIN AND BASIL WOLVERTON IN YOUR STYLE BUT AGAIN YOURS IS A UNIQUE VISION. KEEP THE COLOR. I KNOW IT TAKES MORE TIME AND YOU'RE NO SLOUCH AT DOING BLACK AND WHITE BUT YOU ARE THE **BEST** COLORIST IN COMICS. IT INCREASES AN ALREADY GOOD COMIC BOOK INTO A MAGNIFICENT ONE.

O.K. ON TO THE POINT I WANTED TO WRITE YOU ABOUT. A MR. CRAIG A. STORMON, LIKE A GREAT MANY OTHERS, TAKES YOU TO TASK FOR REPRINTING OLD STORIES IN THE BACK OF YOUR NEW MATERIAL. QUOTING THE GENTLEMAN, "MOST OF YOUR FANS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU SINCE THE EARLY 70'S OR BEFORE." WELL, I HAPPEN TO BE ONE FAN OF YOURS WHO HASN'T. I GUESS IT'S ALL MY FAULT THAT I WASN'T BORN UNTIL 1969 AND TOOK A FEW YEARS AFTER THAT TO START COLLECTING COMICS. IT'S MY HUMBLE OPINION THAT MR. STORMON UNDERESTIMATES BOTH YOUR ABILITY TO DRAW IN NEW FANS AND THE TASTE OF THE YOUNGER FANS. LISTEN, IF YOU WANT TO (AND I WISH YOU WOULD), YOU COULD PUT OUT A COMIC BOOK DEVOTED TO REPRINTS OF YOUR WORK. THINK OF IT, YOU COULD HAVE A MONTHLY REPRINT BOOK OUT AND COULD CONTINUE TO PUT OUT BIMONTHLY SERIES OF NEW MATERIAL. IT WOULD HELP GET FANTAGOR PRESS REALLY RUNNING AND WOULD GAIN YOU EVEN MORE FANS. I'VE SEEN **MUTANT WORLD** AND A LARGE AMOUNT OF YOUR WORK FOR WARREN'S **CREEPY**. IF ALL YOUR OLD WORK IS AT THE LEVEL OF THOSE AND THE **RAZAR** TRILOGY, IT CAN'T MISS! JUST THINK ABOUT IT (THEN PLEASE DO IT).

DAVID ERIC BARNES
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA.

THANKS DAVID. I'D LOVE TO GET THE RIGHTS TO THE WARREN MATERIAL I DID. THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH THE IDEA THOUGH. AS WARREN PUBLISHING WENT BANKRUPT, HE SOLD EVERYTHING TO ANOTHER PUBLISHER. THIS OTHER PUBLISHER REFUSES TO EVEN DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY.

I ANNOUNCED LAST ISSUE THAT THE BACKUP STORY THIS TIME WOULD BE TO MEET THE FACES YOU MEET. THE CONCLUSION OF CHILDREN WORKED OUT TO BE LONGER THAN EXPECTED SO KITTEN'S FOR CHRISTIAN WAS SUBSTITUTED AS THE BACKUP.

THAT'S IT FOR NOW. DEN COMICS WILL BE APPEARING IN JUNE. DON'T MISS IT!

EEEEEEYYAAAAAUGH!!
CHILDREN OF FIRE
NUMBER 3
WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT?
O XIN'H HTONR CIA FUNH HI RNIF. ...
... ER, DON'T WANT KNOW.
YIPE, FE PASH TAKKC, ... GO NOW!
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SMEK!
BLDK
CRASH

GAUGH!
KRDBK
AARG!

BLDK
KRND
WAIT. WHAT'S THE HURRY? NO ONE'S CHASING US.
FE PASH TAKKC. HURRY!
OH. HERE'S SOME TOPATOES. WE'D BETTER COLLECT A FEW. WE'LL NEED THEM LATER.
XUNVEK. ... DANGER!
IT. WIIX- FOOD? OS OH VIIX? GOOD?
THEY'RE DELICIOUS.
CLAMS HERE. DIG!
CES. YES! CLAMS GOOD?

KRAK
SKRAK!
WHUD
UOF!
THUMP
PANT, PANT, PANT!
YES, NOW ZOMUK EAT LAST EGG!
?

UNH!

SOMETHING'S DREADFULLY WRONG. THEY'RE DESCENDING LIKE VULTURES TO STEAL MY TREASURES!
I MUST TAKE THEM AWAY AND HIDE THEM.

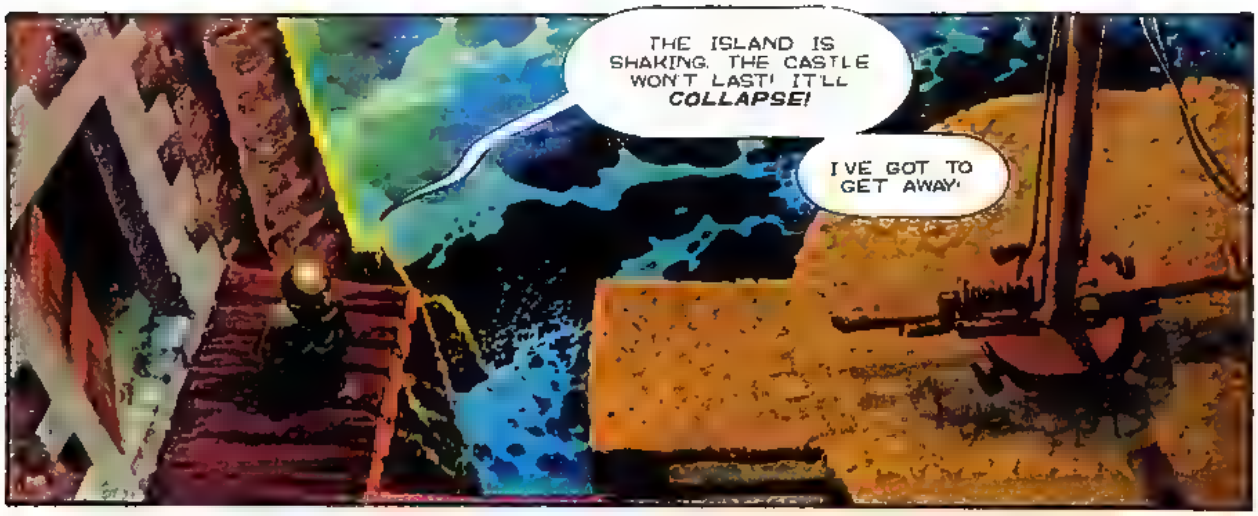
UNH! EERGH!
PANT, PANT, PANT!

AN IMPERCEPTIBLE VIBRATION SHUDDERED THROUGH THE ISLANDS BULK. THEN, AFTER A PAUSE, IT SHOOK AGAIN, BUT THIS TIME NO ONE MISSED IT.
RRUUMMMBLE
WHAT?
OOH!
SPLAT
AH! WHAT'S HAPPENING?
NO MORE FOOD, PUCCA! HURRY!

GRAUWGH!!
BASH
KRAK
THROK

THRAK

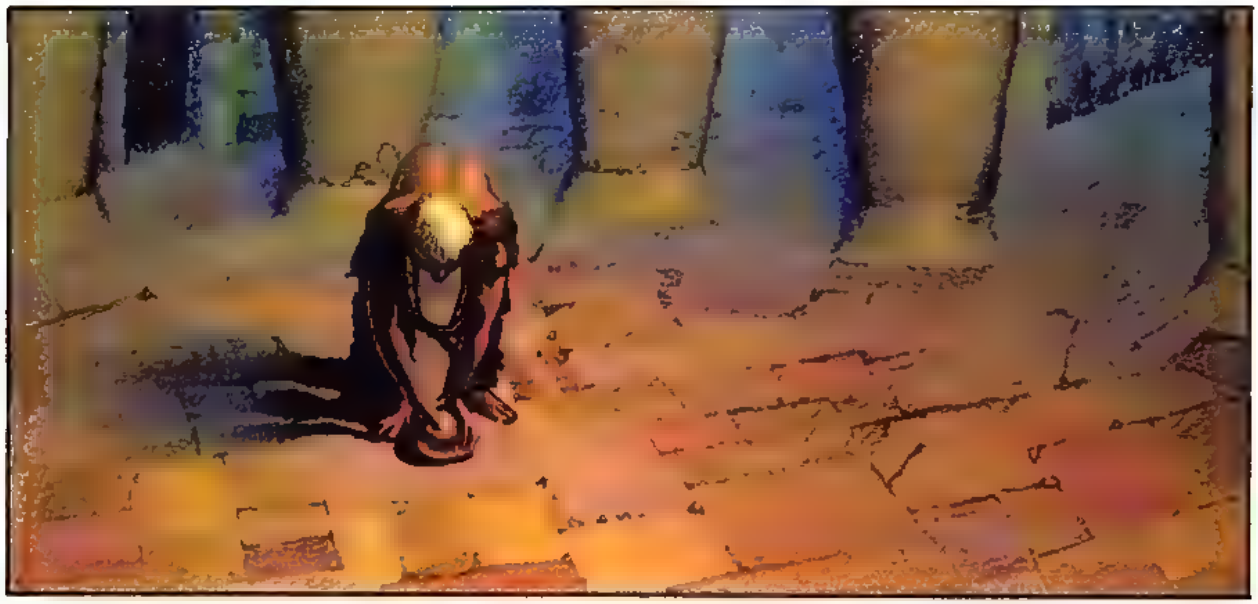
PANT, PANT, PANT!
PANT, PANT, PK-
YAAAUGHK-
KRAK
CRUNCH
BASH


THE ISLAND IS SHAKING. THE CASTLE WON'T LAST! IT'LL COLLAPSE!
I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY!

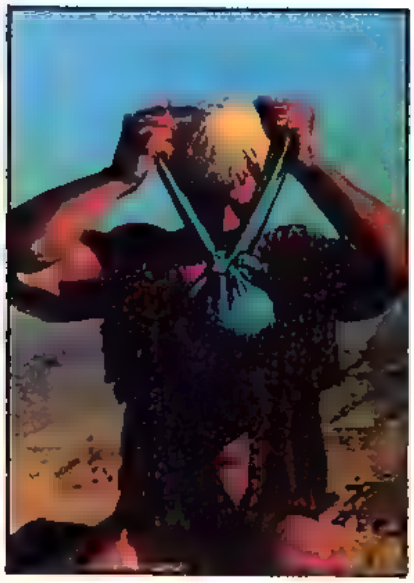
BUT WHERE CAN I GO?
WAIT... THE PIRATES BOAT IS ON THE FAR SHORE

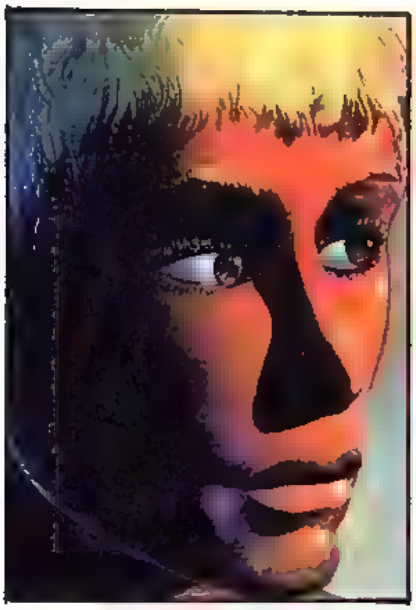
MAST!
PUSH!
THOSE CRUSTACEANS ARE GOOD TO EAT TOO!
NO! MUST LEAVE, NOW!

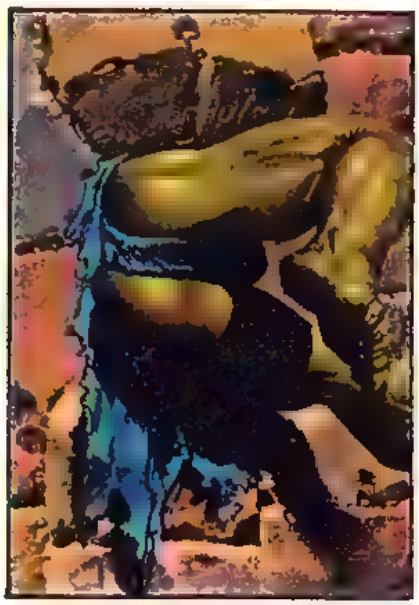
EEEEEEEYAAAAUGH!
NOOO!
HAUGH!
THUNK!



RIP







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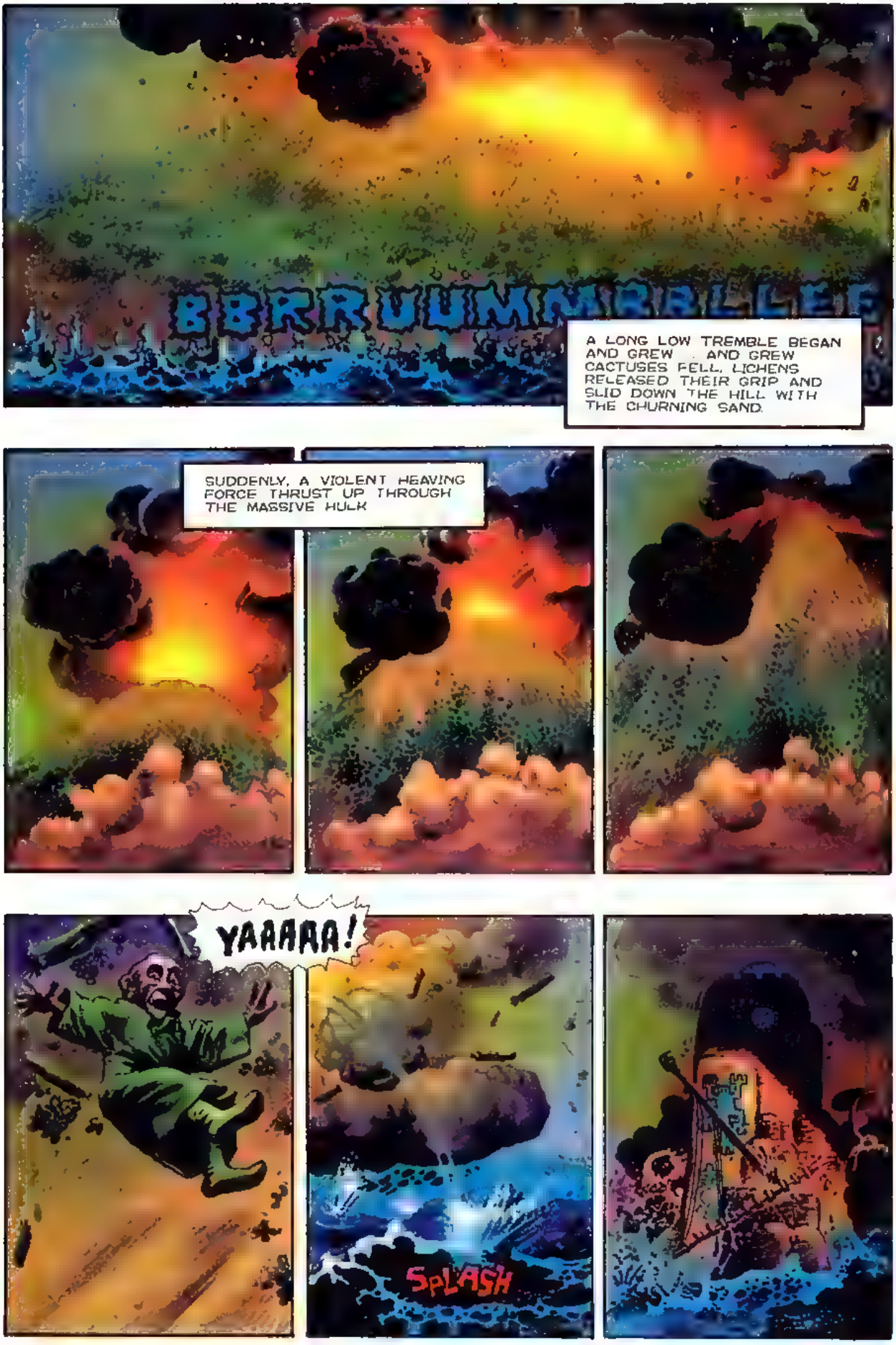
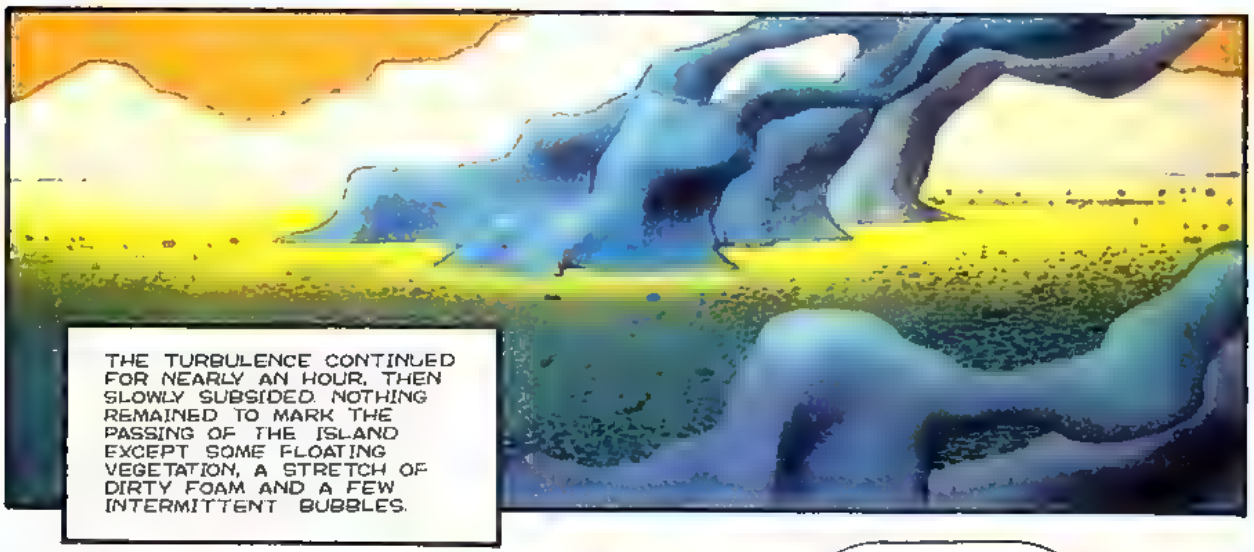

BBRRUUMMRRLLEE
A LONG LOW TREMBLE BEGAN AND GREW . . AND GREW CACTUSES FELL. LICHENS RELEASED THEIR GRIP AND SLID DOWN THE HILL WITH THE CHURNING SAND.
SUDDENLY, A VIOLENT HEAVING FORCE THRUST UP THROUGH THE MASSIVE HULK
YAAAAA!
SPLASH

HIIGH!
CLAP
BLOUGH

LIKE A GIGANTIC BEAST FROM THE DAWN OF TIME, THE ISLAND MADDENED BY THE BURNING COAL ON ITS BACK, THREW OFF THE COVERING OF SAND AND VEGETATION

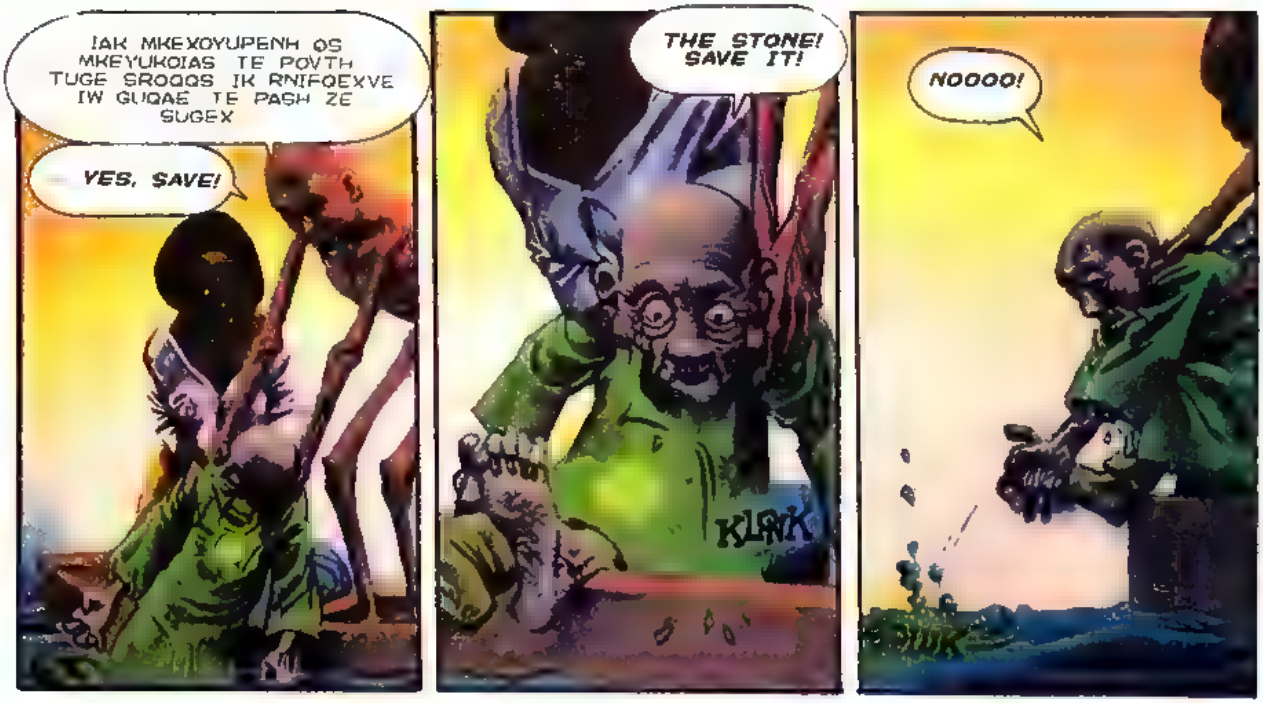
THE INCREDIBLE BULK SURGED FORWARD AND BEGAN TO SINK. WATER RUSHED OVER ITS MASSIVE BACK. THEN A HUGE FLIPPER ROSE FROM A HUNDRED YARDS OFF SHORE
SSSSQQQUEEERRROOOOAAAARRR
THE ISLAND BEGAN TO RISE AGAIN. HIGHER AND HIGHER. A CREATURE OF UNIMAGINABLE DIMENSIONS SQUEALED AND SCREAMED IN ANGRY PAIN FROM THE COSMIC HOT FOOT
SSSSSHHHR
RRROOOOOU
SSSSHHHH

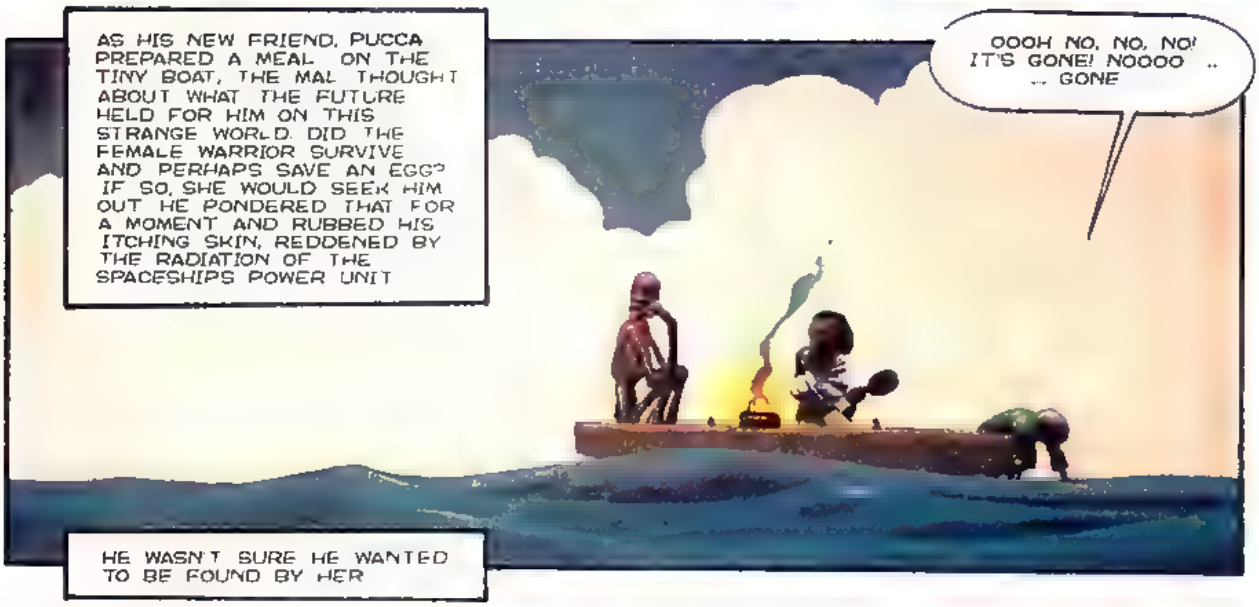
ROOAR!
KERSPLASH

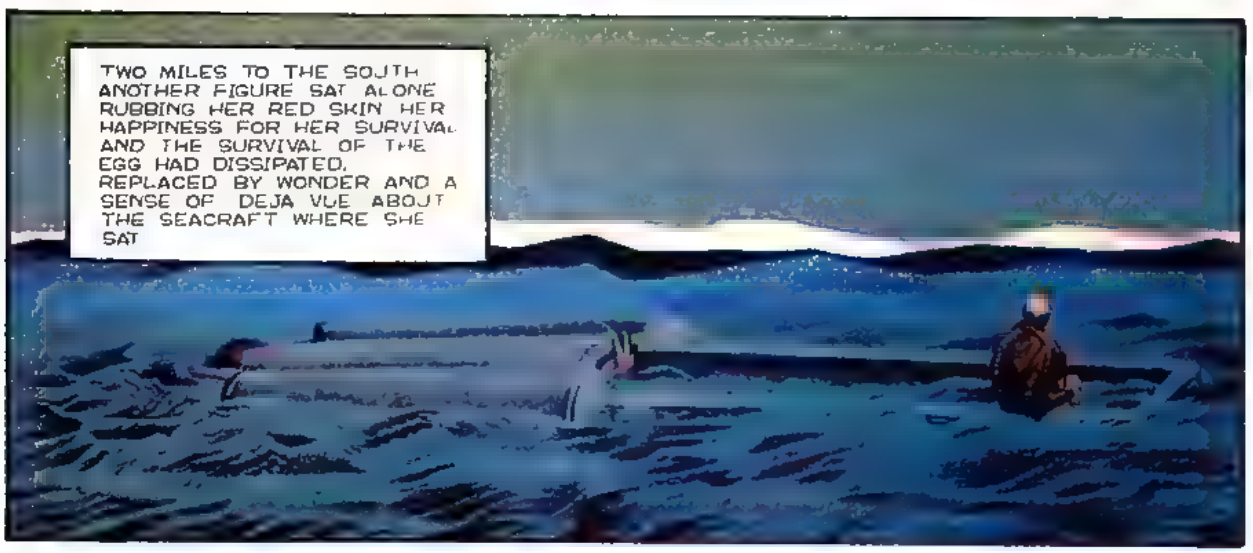

THE TURBULENCE CONTINUED FOR NEARLY AN HOUR, THEN SLOWLY SUBSIDED. NOTHING REMAINED TO MARK THE PASSING OF THE ISLAND EXCEPT SOME FLOATING VEGETATION, A STRETCH OF DIRTY FOAM AND A FEW INTERMITTENT BUBBLES.

A TINY FIGURE CLUTCHED DESPERATELY AT SOME FLOATING DEBRIS. HE HELD A GLOWING OBJECT IN HIS ROBES

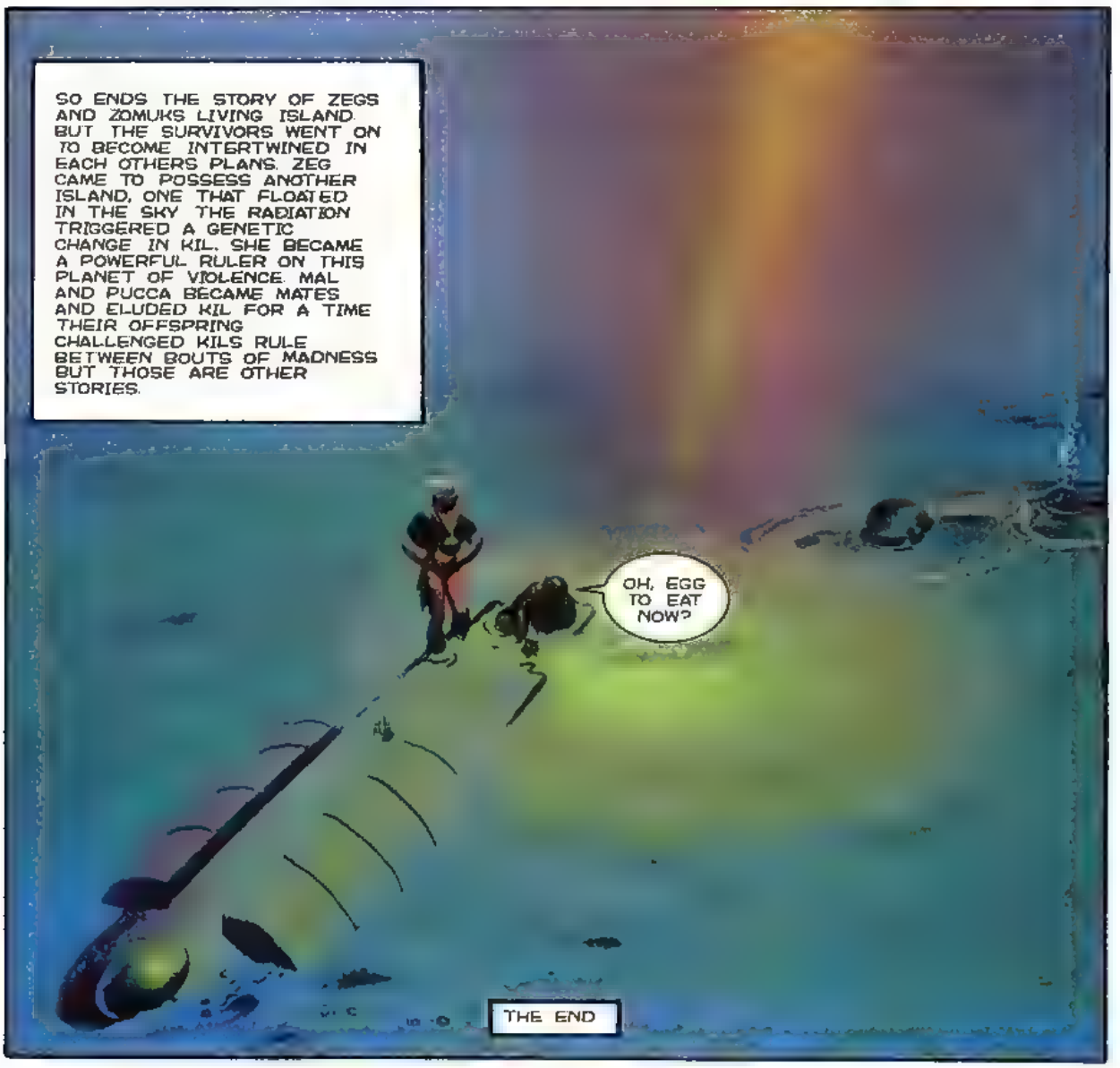
DON'T PULL HIM OUT. HE KEPT ME AS A SLAVE


IAK MKEXOYUPENH OS MKEYUKOIAS TE POVTH TUGE SROQQS IK RNIFQEXVE IW GUQAE TE PASH ZE SUGEX
YES, SAVE!
THE STONE! SAVE IT!
KLANK
NOOOO!


AS HIS NEW FRIEND, PUCCA PREPARED A MEAL ON THE TINY BOAT, THE MAL THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE HELD FOR HIM ON THIS STRANGE WORLD. DID THE FEMALE WARRIOR SURVIVE AND PERHAPS SAVE AN EGG? IF SO, SHE WOULD SEEK HIM OUT HE PONDERED THAT FOR A MOMENT AND RUBBED HIS ITCHING SKIN, REDDENED BY THE RADIATION OF THE SPACESHIPS POWER UNIT
OOOH NO, NO, NO! IT'S GONE! NOOOO .. ... GONE
HE WASN'T SURE HE WANTED TO BE FOUND BY HER


TWO MILES TO THE SOUTH ANOTHER FIGURE SAT ALONE RUBBING HER RED SKIN HER HAPPINESS FOR HER SURVIVAL AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE EGG HAD DISSIPATED, REPLACED BY WONDER AND A SENSE OF DEJA VUE ABOUT THE SEACRAFT WHERE SHE SAT

IT WAS A SUBMARINE DESIGNED BY HER OWN PEOPLE AND ASSEMBLED HERE ON THIS PLANET YEARS AGO, WHILE SHE HAD FLOATED IN A DREAMLESS SLEEP, IN COSMIC SPACE. A COLONY HAD BEEN HERE AND LEFT THIS ARTIFACT
SHE DIDN'T FEEL WELL THE RADIATION HAD DONE SOMETHING TO HER. SHE THOUGHT ABOUT THE MAL, ... AND ABOUT THE CREATURE, ZOMUK. A FAMILIAR FRAGMENT OF FLOATING DEBRIS CAUGHT HER EYE.
NOOO! DON'T HIT ZOMUK!


SO ENDS THE STORY OF ZEGS AND ZOMUKS LIVING ISLAND. BUT THE SURVIVORS WENT ON TO BECOME INTERTWINED IN EACH OTHERS PLANS. ZEG CAME TO POSSESS ANOTHER ISLAND, ONE THAT FLOATED IN THE SKY. THE RADIATION TRIGGERED A GENETIC CHANGE IN KIL. SHE BECAME A POWERFUL RULER ON THIS PLANET OF VIOLENCE. MAL AND PUCCA BECAME MATES AND ELUDED KIL FOR A TIME. THEIR OFFSPRING CHALLENGED KILS RULE BETWEEN BOUTS OF MADNESS BUT THOSE ARE OTHER STORIES.
OH, EGG TO EAT NOW?
THE END

KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN

I DIDN'T THINK MUCH OF THE IDEA BUT LUTHER HAD ORDERED CAT FOR DINNER SO WE HAD TO BRING BACK CAT. WE HAD ONE OR TWO IN THE SACK WHEN SIMON FOUND THE LITTER OF ALBINOS BEHIND THE SUPERMARKET WALL.

SIMON WAS JUST SCOOPING THEM INTO A SHOEBOX WHEN I SAW THE MOMMA CAT COME AROUND THE CORNER.

I DIDN'T SAY NOTHING BECAUSE NORMALLY YOU DON'T EXPECT NO TROUBLE FROM THEM. MOST OF THE ANIMALS HAVE BEEN PRETTY CAUTIOUS SINCE THE WAR, EXCEPT WHEN THEY'RE DESPERATE FOR SOMETHING TO EAT. BUT THIS OLD MOMMA CAT WAS JUST PLAIN MAD.

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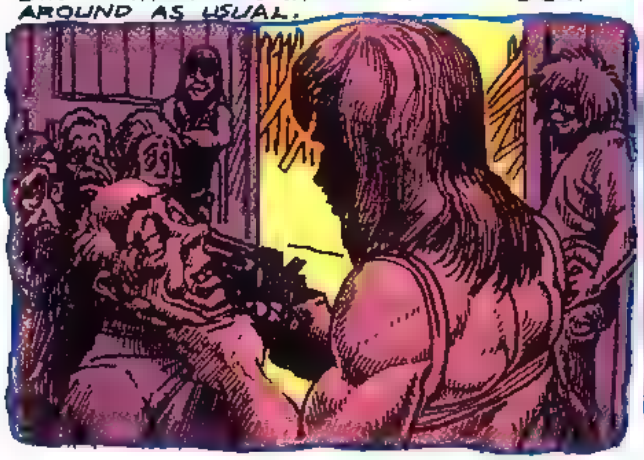
SHE LATCHED ONTO SIMON'S FACE WITH ALL FOUR FEET, TRYING TO SCRATCH HIS EYES OUT. SIMON DROPPED THE BOX OF KITTENS AND GRABBED HER WITH BOTH HANDS.

HE RIPPED HER OFF HIS FACE, BUT SHE NEVER DID LET GO. A GOOD AMOUNT OF SIMON'S SKIN WENT WITH HER.

SIMON TOOK HOLD OF HER TAIL AND SWUNG HER UP AGAINST THE WALL SO HARD I KNOW HE KILLED HER THE FIRST TIME. BUT HE JUST KEPT SWINGING HER AGAINST THAT WALL UNTIL HE WAS TOO TIRED TO DO IT ANYMORE.

FINALLY HE LET HER DROP. YOU COULD HARDLY TELL IT USED TO BE A CAT.

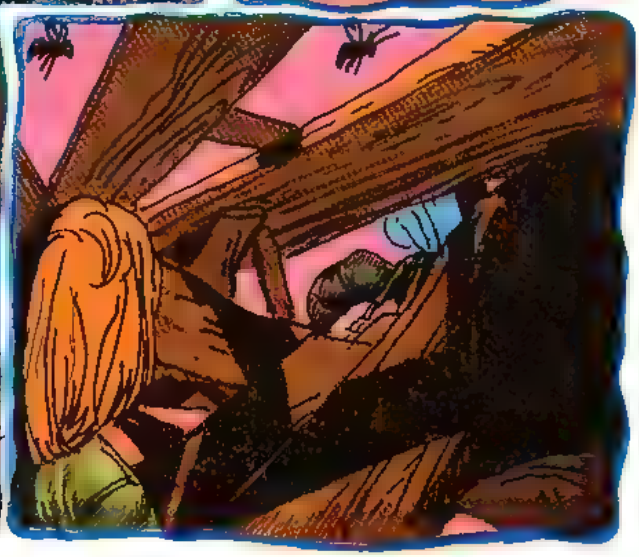
IT WAS ALL LUTHER'S FAULT THAT SIMON WAS THE KIND OF PERSON WHO'D DO SUCH A THING. SIMON DIDN'T USED TO BE THAT WAY. HE EVEN SAVED MY LIFE ONCE, RIGHT AFTER WE'D RAIDED THAT ONE STOCKADE. MOSTLY A BUNCH OF MIDDLEAGED HOLD-OUTS WHO DIDN'T PUT UP MUCH OF A FIGHT, BUT LUTHER WAS THROWING HIS WEIGHT AROUND AS USUAL.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT MADE THOSE WASPS SO BIG, BUT THEY WASN'T THE ONLY THINGS THAT STARTED GROWING LARGER AFTER THE WAR. THEY WAS JUST ONE THING MORE TO MAKE LIFE ROUGH FOR WHAT FEW OF US WAS LEFT.

I FIGURED I WAS DONE FOR WHEN I TRIPPED.

I TOLD HIM TO GO ON, BUT SIMON STOPPED AND PULLED ME UP.

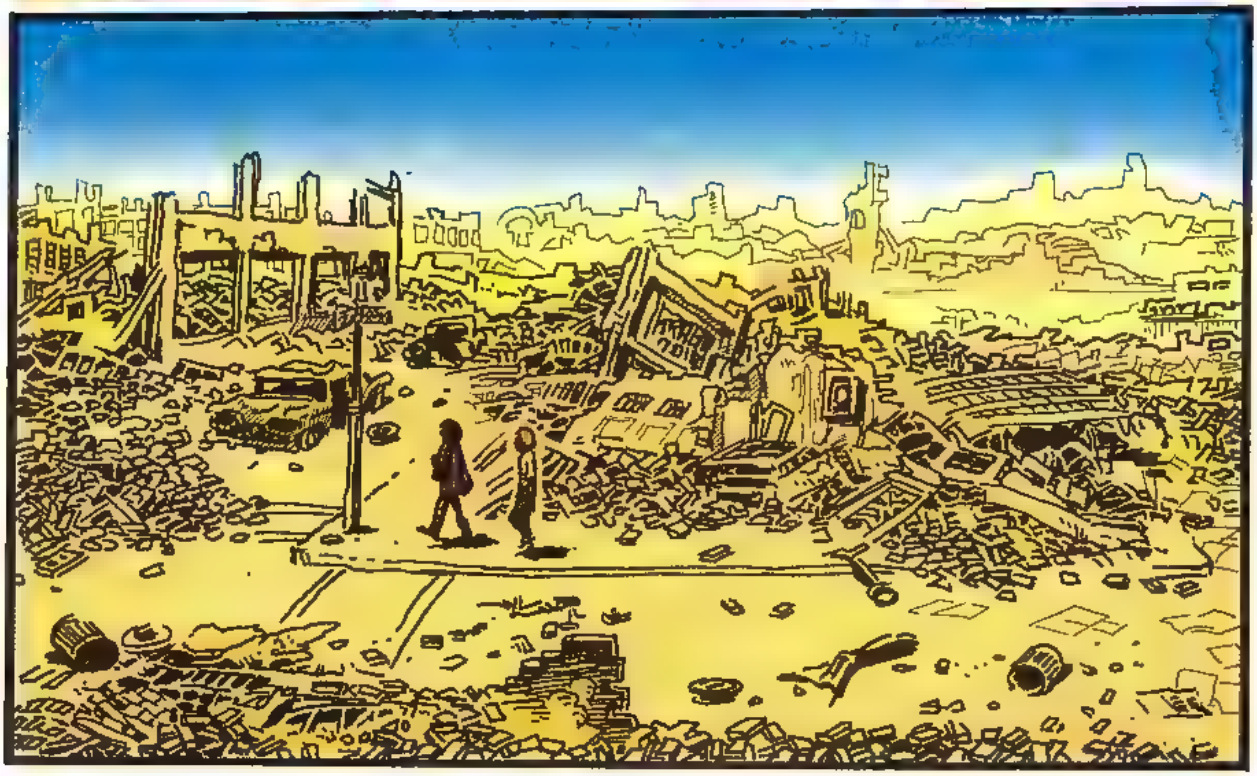


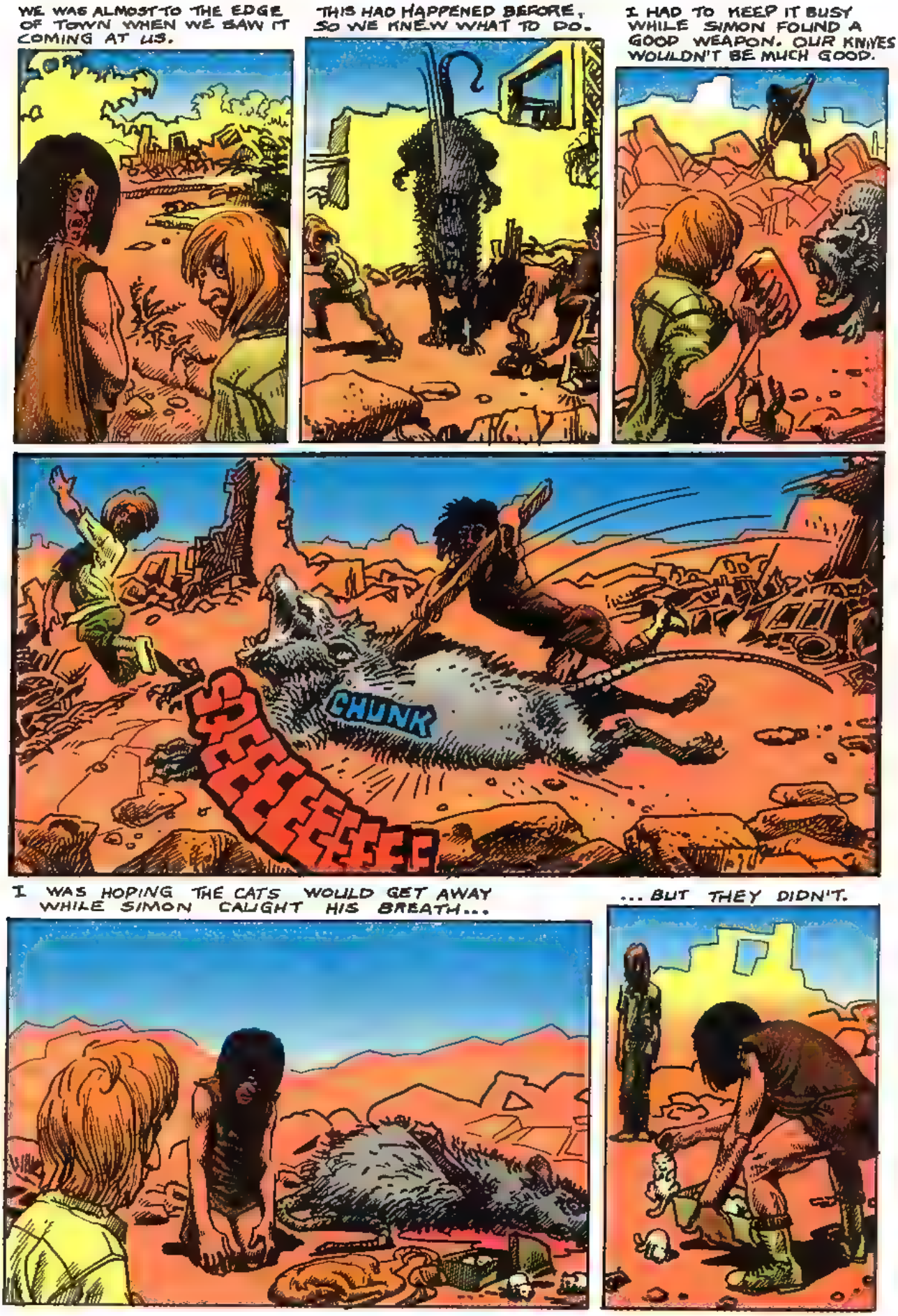
FINALLY THE WASPS WAS GONE AND WE COULD GET OUT.
WE GOT TO STICK TOGETHER, CHRISTIAN. IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GOING TO SURVIVE-- BY STICKING TOGETHER.

YOU COMING CHRISTIAN?

SIMON WASN'T THE SAME ANY-MORE. HE'D GOTTEN USED TO THE WAY THINGS WERE, AND THEY WASN'T TOO PLEASANT.

I COULDN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF THE KITTENS. THEY HARDLY HAD THEIR EYE S OPEN...
CHRISTIAN! COME ON!




WE WAS ALMOST TO THE EDGE OF TOWN WHEN WE SAW IT COMING AT US.
THIS HAD HAPPENED BEFORE, SO WE KNEW WHAT TO DO.
I HAD TO KEEP IT BUSY WHILE SIMON FOUND A GOOD WEAPON. OUR KNIVES WOULDN'T BE MUCH GOOD.
CHUNK
SCREEEEEEE
I WAS HOPING THE CATS WOULD GET AWAY WHILE SIMON CAUGHT HIS BREATH...
... BUT THEY DIDN'T.

SIMON WHISTLED OUR THEME SONG AS WE APPROACHED THE HOUSE TO LET EVERYBODY KNOW WHO WE WERE. I SHOULD HAVE WHISTLED TOO, BUT I COULDN'T. MY MOUTH WAS TOO DRY.
SIMON AND CHRISTIAN ARE BACK, AND THEY'VE GOT SOMETHING. BETTER GO TELL LUTHER.
AH, LUTHER CAN WAIT.
MAYBE I DON'T WANT TO WAIT.
HONEST LUTHER-- I WAS ONLY K-NIDDING!
BUMP

IN THE FUTURE, SAVE YOUR KIDDING FOR SOMEONE WHO APPRECIATES IT. NOW LET'S GO SEE WHAT SIMON AND THE KID BROUGHT US FOR DINNER.
SO THE MIGHTY HUNTERS HAVE RETURNED. AND FOR THEIR OWN SAKES I HOPE THEY BRING US CAT.
BROUGHT MORE THAN THAT, LUTHER -- TAKE A LOOK.
WHAT IS IT, LUTHER?!

I DIDN'T WANT TO WATCH NO MORE.
WHERE TO CHRISTIAN? IT'S YOUR NIGHT FOR KITCHEN CHORES.
NO IT ISN'T! IT ISN'T MY TURN!
I GUESS YOU WEREN'T HERE WHEN I ANNOUNCED THE NEW SCHEDULE. IT'S YOUR TURN ALL RIGHT!
ARGUE
I KNEW IT WASN'T NO GOOD TO ARGUE. BUT I ALSO KNEW THAT I COULDN'T DO IT, NO MATTER WHAT. I JUST WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO IT.
THAT LITTLE BASTARD...!
I'LL GET HIM!

I'M SORRY CHRISTIAN, BUT I HAD TO DO IT. HE WAS GOING TO SHOOT!
YOU GOT A HELL OF A LONG WAY, DIDN'T YOU CHRISTIAN?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOU, CHRISTIAN. YOU JUST HAVEN'T GOT THE GROUP SPIRIT.
WHUD
JUUNNNNNNH!

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THAT, LUTHER. I DON'T BELONG HERE AT ALL. AND NEITHER DOES SIMON. WE'RE LEAVING, AND YOU AIN'T GOING TO STOP US.
YOU'RE WRONG CHRISTIAN. I'M STAYING HERE.
WE'D NEVER BE ABLE TO LIVE OUT THERE, CHRISTIAN, NOT BY OURSELVES. YOU SEE THAT DON'T YOU? YOU SEE WHY I HAVE TO STAY HERE...
I'M... SORRY CHRISTIAN.
THEN I'LL GO BY MYSELF -- AND I'LL SHOOT THE FIRST PERSON WHO TRIES TO COME AFTER ME!
WE GOING AFTER HIM LUTHER?
NO -- FORGET HIM. HE'LL NEVER MAKE IT OUT THERE. HE HASN'T GOT A CHANCE. HE'LL BE BACK IN A WEEK, BEGGING US TO TAKE HIM BACK IN. YOU'LL SEE.

EPILOGUE THE GANG'S GROWN A LITTLE BIT SINCE I LEFT IT, BUT THINGS DON'T SEEM TO HAVE CHANGED MUCH. I IMAGINE LUTHER STILL MISSES HIS PISTOL, THOUGH.

THEY DIDN'T THINK I'D BE ABLE TO SURVIVE OUT HERE, AND I ALMOST DIDN'T AT FIRST. BUT I DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT MUCH ANYMORE, NOT SINCE THE KITTENS GREW UP.

THEY WAS SLOW TO GET STARTED, BUT ONCE THEY STARTED GROWING THEY JUST DIDN'T WANT TO QUIT. LIKE THE WASPS AND THE RATS I GUESS.

WE GET ALONG FINE, THE CATS AND ME. AND ONE OF THESE DAYS WE'RE GOING TO SHOW LUTHER JUST WHAT BECAME OF CHRISTIAN AND HIS KITTENS. WE'LL SHOW HIM GOOD.

END